

**Alliance for a Living Ocean * Animal Welfare Institute * Animal Wellness Action
Animal Wellness Foundation * Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Berkshire Environmental Action Team * Born Free USA * Center for a Humane Economy
Center for Biological Diversity * Cetacean Society International
Conservation Law Foundation * Defenders of Wildlife
Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families * Earth Law Center
Earthjustice * Endangered Habitats League * Endangered Species Coalition
Environment America * Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Protection Information Center * Exocetus Autonomous Systems
Friends of the Earth * Friends of the WI Wolf & Wildlife * Gotham Whale
Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance * GreenLatinos * Greenpeace USA
Healthy Gulf * Howling For Wolves * Humane Society Legislative Fund
Inland Ocean Coalition * International Fund for Animal Welfare
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute * Klamath Forest Alliance
League of Conservation Voters * Marine Mammal Alliance Nantucket * Mystic Aquarium
Natural Resources Defense Council * Northcoast Environmental Center * NY4WHALES
Ocean Conservation Research * Oceana * Oceanic Preservation Society
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition * Sanctuary Education Advisory Specialists
Save Animals Facing Extinction * Save Our Shores * Save the Manatee
Seacoast Science Center * SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment * Sierra Club
Southern Environmental Law Center * The Humane Society of the United States
Turtle Island Restoration Network * Unexpected Wildlife Refuge
Whale and Dolphin Conservation * Wild Zone Conservation League * WILDCOAST
WildEarth Guardians * Wildlife Conservation Society * Women Working for Oceans
World Wildlife Fund**

November 12, 2019

RE: Please support S. 2453, the SAVE Right Whales Act

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our millions of members and activists nationwide, we strongly urge you to vote yes on the bipartisan SAVE Right Whales Act, S. 2453. Led by Senators Booker (D-NJ), Isakson (R-GA) and Carper (D-DE), S. 2453 is vital legislation that would support the recovery of the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale.

We are at a pivotal point in the history of the North Atlantic right whale: no more than 400 remain on earth, and only 95 of those are reproductively active females. If we fail to act, the North Atlantic right whale could be effectively extinct within our lifetime.ⁱ However, if we take strong, immediate action, we can reasonably expect this population to survive and rebound.

The bipartisan SAVE Right Whales Act would support the recovery of this iconic species by addressing the two greatest threats to right whales: entanglement and ship strikes. Entanglement in fishing gear is the leading cause of the North Atlantic right whale population's decline, causing the majority of diagnosable deaths from 2003 to 2018.ⁱⁱ 85 percent of surviving North

Atlantic right whales also bear scars from being entangled at least once.ⁱⁱⁱ Entanglements not only cause deaths, but severely impair the whales' ability to produce calves.^{iv} Ship collisions are the North Atlantic right whale's second major cause of death and serious injury. While tremendous gains have been made in preventing ship strikes,^v research is urgently needed to develop detection and avoidance measures to help prevent right whale collisions with vessels.

The SAVE Right Whales Act would support efforts by the U.S. fishing and shipping industries to develop solutions to minimize the impacts of human activities on the North Atlantic right whale. Specifically, the bill would establish a new grant program at the Department of Commerce to fund collaborative projects between states, nongovernmental organizations, and members of the fishing and shipping industries to develop, test, and implement new technologies and other strategies to reduce entanglements and vessel collisions. The bill would provide a sustained source of federal funding—\$5 million annually over 10 years—to support this urgently-needed action.

Without action, the North Atlantic right whale may be effectively extinct within just a few decades. Congress has the opportunity to reverse this trend and prevent the extinction of this iconic species by supporting the SAVE Right Whales Act. We strongly urge you to do so.

Sincerely,

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ⁱ Pennisi, E. (2017, December 08). The North Atlantic right whale faces extinction. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/11/north-atlantic-right-whale-faces-extinction>

ⁱⁱ Sharp, S.M., McLellan, W.A., Rotstein, D.S., Costidis, A.M., Barco, S.G., Durham, K., *et al.*, Gross and histopathologic diagnoses from North Atlantic right whale, *Eubalaena glacialis*, mortalities between 2003 and 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Gross-and-histopathologic-diagnoses-from-North-2003-Sharp-McLellan/4da1a5202873da9475fa09e0af5b9ebc60297fa5>

ⁱⁱⁱ Moore, M.J. (2019, January 10). How we can all stop killing whales: a proposal to avoid whale entanglement in fishing gear. *ICES Journal of Marine Science*, fsy194. Retrieved from: <https://academic.oup.com/icesjms/advance-article/doi/10.1093/icesjms/fsy194/5288134>

^{iv} van der Hoop, J., Corkeron, P. and Moore, M. (2016, December 11). Entanglement is a costly life-history stage in large whales. *Ecology and evolution*, 7(1), pp.92-106. Retrieved from:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ece3.2615>; Corkeron, P., Hamilton, P., Bannister, J., Best, P., Charlton, C., Groch, K.R., Findlay, K., Rowntree, V., Vermeulen, E. and Pace III, R.M., 2018. The recovery of North Atlantic right whales, *Eubalaena glacialis*, has been constrained by human-caused mortality. *Royal Society open science*, 5(11), p.180892. Retrieved from: <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rsos.180892>

^v In the U.S., these successes include the 2008 Final Rule to Implement Speed Restrictions to Reduce the Threat of Ship Collisions with North Atlantic Right Whales, the Seasonal Management Area and Dynamic Management Area regimes established by this rule, speed monitoring and mapping capacities, and improved alert systems.